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Date: 12/29/2017 10:30:43 AM
Subject: Weekly Update: Reinvesting in our convention center



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Friends,

It seems like I've been saying this quite a bit recently: Our administration is reinvesting in the core of our city like we haven't seen in many years. This runs the gamut — including rebuilding our police department, doubling street paving, casting ambitious visions for the Fairgrounds and the Riverfront, and investing in neighborhood amenities like libraries and community centers.

Today, I want to share more about another subject of our reinvestment — the Memphis Cook Convention Center.

You'll soon see in the news that we've set a project budget of \$175 million to expand and transform our convention center into a modern showplace that will not only preserve its status as a major economic engine for our city, but grow it. (It's worth noting that research proves that renovation is easily the financially responsible option when compared to building a new facility, which is estimated to cost around \$500 million.)

I'll share a few details in a minute, but I want you to know this from the top: **We'll do this at no cost to the local taxpayer.** We're paying for this in two ways, via those who visit our city: through hotel/motel taxes and money from the Downtown Tourism Development Zone. *This will not take away any money we use for core services like police and fire.*

A few other things you should know:

- This is more than simply a renovation — it's an expansion and transformation of the interior and exterior in exciting new ways that take advantage of its location overlooking the Mississippi River. For instance, a new glass concourse will take over the west side of the building, allowing for striking views of the river, the Bass Pro Pyramid and skyline.
- It's also a modernization of the facility, parts of which date to 1974. We'll have hotel quality

- finishes throughout, which will be a great asset as we work to lure more events to Memphis.
- From the parking garage to the main exhibit hall, event and meeting spaces to wayfinding and technology, every area of this convention facility will be touched by the renovation. The Cannon Center for the Performing Arts will also see improvements with cosmetic and back-of-house upgrades.
- The convention center and Cannon Center will both remain open and continue to host events throughout the construction project.

Here's an image that helps capture the project:



Take a closer look at our future convention center by visiting memphistravel.com/conventioncenter.

I'm grateful to our local business and nonprofit communities, which have booked events in the building over the years, for their support, patience and input. The Memphis Meeting Planners Advisory Board looked at the needs of our local stakeholders along with those of meeting planners from around the country, and their input was critical to the improvements.

A construction team, with a goal of 30 percent minority participation in the project, should be chosen in the next few months. We anticipate construction being completed in late 2019 — our bicentennial year. We'll check in on progress from time to time in this space, and I hope you're looking forward, as I am, to the finished product of what will be a game-changer for our already strong tourism industry.

Goal achieved: As you know because we've discussed this here many times, we inherited a challenge with 911 when we came into office. When I was sworn in, we answered your 911 calls in 20 seconds or less only about **half the time**.

This was unacceptable to you, and it was unacceptable to us. So I made sure we fixed it. And I'm proud to report that in November, we broke through and answered **95 percent** of your 911 calls in 20 seconds or less. That's the national standard.

There's another way to look at this, too: In November, our average answer time was 7.79 seconds — down from 59.7 seconds when we took office.

Give credit to Michael Spencer and his excellent staff at MPD Emergency Communications. Our

challenge now is to maintain this national standard, and I know our staff is up to the challenge.

Coming soon: Reducing violent crime is our No. 1 priority, and rebuilding the Memphis Police Department is a crucial step in that. You'll remember that we graduated a class of 85 officers in August — our largest class in years. Please know that another class, which right now has 84 recruits, graduates two weeks from today.

This, coupled with reduced attrition thanks in large part to some compensation and benefits initiatives we've undertaken, should deliver our first net annual gain of MPD officers in seven years.

Holiday schedule: Our garbage and recycling collections for next week, the week of New Year's Day, will follow the same plan as Christmas week: Every collection day will be delayed by one day. This means Monday collections on Tuesday, and all the way through with Friday collections on Saturday.

Go Tigers Go: We'll close a busy Weekly Update with a great week for our Tigers. The AutoZone Liberty Bowl is always a terrific asset for our city, and we're so grateful that thousands of Iowa State fans will be in our city in advance of Saturday's game. Welcome to town!

We're expecting a sellout, so it's important you know the particulars of traffic and parking before you go. [Click here](#) for a complete guide.

As a Tiger football season ticket holder for years and years, I'm filled with pride that our hometown University of Memphis is playing in our prestigious bowl. Coach Mike Norvell and these Tigers have redefined Tiger football pride, and I'm just happy to be along for the ride.

I know you are, too.

Yours,



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